DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 220 FL 027 705

TITLE	UK Capability in Languages: Response from the Centre for Language in Education to the Nuffield Languages Inquiry. Occasional Paper.
INSTITUTION	Southampton Univ. (England). Centre for Language Education.
REPORT NO	CLE-OP-54
PUB DATE	1999-04-00
NOTE	20p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Centre for Language in Education, Research & Graduate School of Education, University of Southhampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, England, United Kingdom. Tel: 00-44-0-1703-592433; Fax: 00-44-0-1703-593556; e-mail: rc4@soton.ac.uk; Web site: http://www.education.soton.ac.uk/research_and_centres/centres_and_divisions/.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Cultural Awareness; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Multilingualism; Public Policy ; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS	*United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This paper responds to the Nuffield Languages Inquiry regarding the following: what language capabilities the United Kingdom (UK) will need in the next 20 years to fulfill its economic, strategic, social, and cultural goals and aspirations; the extent to which current policies and arrangements meet these needs; and strategic planning and initiatives needed. In recent decades, English has achieved an unprecedented world role, but current patterns of world demography and population are rapidly changing the relative numbers of first language speakers for significant languages. Thus, the UK must provide foreign language training as an integral part of education for all citizens. Citizens must become proficient in at least one major language of the European Union (French, German, and Spanish). The paper recommends including a language question in the Census of the Population to determine the range of languages spoken. The United Kingdom lacks coordination from one sector to the next at all levels of foreign language learning. A shortage of foreign language teachers is a critical problem. It is necessary to recognize the interconnectedness between the development of English and other mother tongues and the move into foreign languages; language competence and awareness; and language development and the need to improvise and make mistakes in the course of learning. (Contains 17 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

CENTRE FOR Language IN EDUCATION

University of Southampton

ED 477 220

UK Capability in Languages

Response from the Centre for Language in Education to the Nuffield Languages Inquiry

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.J. Brumfit

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Centre for Language in Education: Occasional Paper No 54

c/o Research & Graduate School of Education
University of Southampton
Southampton SO17 1BJ

April 1999

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FL027705

UK Capability in Languages

Response from the Centre for Language in Education to the Nuffield Languages Enquiry

Preface

The Nuffield Languages Inquiry is a UK-wide inquiry appointed by the charitable Nuffield Foundation, and scheduled to run from Spring 1998 to the end of 1999. The brief of the Inquiry is to estimate the United Kingdom's needs for capability in languages over the next 20 years, and to assess whether the present picture of language provision represents a firm foundation for the future. The inquiry is jointly chaired by Trevor McDonald and Sir John Boyd, and the Secretary to the Inquiry is Alan Moys, ex-Director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.

In autumn 1998 the Inquiry published a preliminary discussion document, *Where are we going with languages?* (available on demand from the Inquiry secretariat). In his introduction, Moys explains the purpose of the Inquiry:

> "There has been intermittent pressure for a national policy on languages for many years, and a number of significant initiatives in the past have addressed particular areas of concern, such as the Hayter Report (1961) which in particular made significant recommendations on the importance of Russian, the British Overseas Trade Board's report on languages and export performance (1979), and the Parker report on oriental languages (1986). In additional central government has in recent years published documents about provision of languages in connection with policy initiatives such as those in the area of the school curriculum. However in a century which has been characterised by explosive growth in the technology of travel and communication, we have had to wait until the last moments before the new millennium to take an overall strategic look at our powers as a nation to communicate adequately with speakers of other languages" (Moys ed 1998 p 4).

The Nuffield Inquiry has been asked to consider the following questions and to make recommendations:

1. *What capability in languages will the United Kingdom need in the next 20 years if it is to fulfil its economic, strategic, social and cultural aims and responsibilities, and the aspirations of its citizens?*

2. *To what extent do present policies and arrangements meet these needs?*

3. *What strategic planning and initiatives will be required in the light of the present position?*

The Inquiry has circulated a questionnaire focusing on these three issues, and invited responses from all sections of the community, including individuals, groups and organisations, language professionals, and members of the wider society.

The Centre for Language in Education has been in existence since 1986, as an interdisciplinary grouping of staff at the University of Southampton and associated institutions, with members drawn from Arts, Social Sciences and Educational Studies. The promotion of a more coherent policy for language in the various levels and sectors of the UK education system has been a consistent theme in the activities of the Centre, reflected in publications such as our collective book *Language education in the National Curriculum* (Brumfit ed 1995). We have consequently produced a substantial response to the Nuffield Inquiry, through a process of group discussion and internal consultation, and are now making this response available through the *CLE Occasional Papers* format to a wider audience. We wish the Nuffield Inquiry well in its deliberations, and hope very much that they will contribute to a more consistent and forward looking vision of language education in the UK which is relevant to the 21st century.

Rosamond Mitchell
Chair, CLE
February 1999

For anyone wishing to obtain copies of *Where are we Going with Languages?*, or to make further submissions, the Nuffield Inquiry can be contacted at the following address:

Nuffield Languages Inquiry
PO Box 2671
London W1A 3SH
Telephone 0171 9115054
Fax 0171 9115167
nuflang@compuserve.com

Introduction to the CLE Response

We preface the CLE responses to the specific questions asked by Nuffield with two introductory comments.

Firstly, we believe that Modern Languages policy can only be planned satisfactorily within a more general specification of national policy for language, including English. This position was outlined in a short paper submitted to the Inquiry on 13 December 1998, entitled *Modern Languages within a Policy for Language in Education*. Key points made in that paper can be summarised as follows:

- the National Curriculum legislation has provided us unintentionally with a national language education policy, but it is never discussed in its entirety and it needs to be if we are to have a coherent position;
- language development can be fruitfully viewed as a continual development and modification of repertoires that are used by individuals for different purposes at different times, and competent foreign language use grows naturally out of first language experience;
- in Britain the key fact of English domination of international communication has to be the starting point for most learners;
- but Britain is also an increasingly multilingual society, and the aspirations of its citizens will be increasingly blocked if the co-existence of many languages within both Britain and the rest of Europe is not a central issue in curriculum planning;
- a definition of minimum provision (within resource constraints) is necessary to set the goals for British education: a "Language Charter" for all learners will help to define the linguistic agenda. The components of this should include (i) confident development of personal use of English or other home language; (ii) competence in standard public-life English usage; (iii) understanding of the multilingual environment in which we live; (iv) extensive practical competence in at least one appropriate foreign language. This provides what should be a guaranteed minimum.

Secondly, we believe that European work which has devoted major efforts to considering the implications of multilingual environments for education is inadequately exploited (indeed far too often ignored) in UK government planning for foreign languages. Our discussion below refers to, and presumes an association with the international systems developed, with considerable non-governmental British input, over the past thirty years of European research and development.

With this as a background context, the CLE responses to specific questions from the Nuffield Inquiry Questionnaire are given below.

1. *What capability in languages will this country need in the next 20 years if it is to fulfil its economic, strategic, social and cultural responsibilities and aims and the aspirations of its citizens?*

1.1 *What kind of FL capability is appropriate for a country whose first language is a major world language?*

In recent decades English has achieved an unprecedented world role. Its relatively small number of native speakers (c370 million), are greatly outnumbered by those who use English as a second language (c700 million), and as a foreign language (perhaps 1 billion). This dominance is due to two specific geopolitical factors: a) the 19th century preeminence of the British empire (and the accompanying industrial revolution which provided the necessary administrative, technological and economic resources), and the later 20th century economic, political and cultural hegemony of the United States.

There is little reason to suppose that this linguistic pattern is going to change significantly within the timeframe of this enquiry (the next twenty years). However it would be wrong to plan for the future on the assumption either that the present global role of English is not reversible, or that the present English L1 countries will enjoy a monopoly of cultural influence on English/ control over English. World language use patterns are dynamic not static, and present patterns of world demography and population growth are rapidly altering the relative numbers of L1 speakers for significant languages (e.g. Spanish and Urdu-Panjabi are gaining relatively, English is losing). Non-English-L1 countries are becoming providers of English language services such as higher education to others (e.g. Scandinavia, Malaysia).

Thus it will continue to make sense for the UK to provide foreign language training as an integral element in the education of all citizens. This training will have a range of educational objectives:

1. The development of a practical communicative capability in at least one relevant foreign language, to at least Threshold Level (Note 1);

2. The development of awareness of how language works as a system, through linked studies and reflection on the structure of English and of at least one foreign language;

3. The conscious development of language learning skills and autonomy as a language learner;

4. The development of intercultural understanding (i.e. knowledge about, and openness towards, the cultures and speakers of other languages, together with skill in operating in intercultural settings).

Together, this set of objectives will ensure that UK citizens have the foundational cultural and linguistic knowledge, attitudes and skills to make them adaptable and mobile, within the UK and Europe, in social and leisure situations. Where professional or other specialised needs for FL skills arise in later life, citizens pre-equipped in this

way will be best placed to further develop their language repertoire, quickly and effectively.

1.2 What levels of FL capability are needed if our citizens – and particularly our young people – are to enjoy equal opportunities within the EU and the wider world?

We believe that all our citizens need to achieve a practical proficiency to at least Threshold Level, in at least one major European language, if they are to experience the practical benefits of foreign language study, and achieve the linked educational goals of language awareness, intercultural understanding etc indicated above. This capability can and should be achieved within the timespan of compulsory schooling (i.e. by age 16). For a sizeable minority at least, this Threshold level capability in FL1 should be complemented by at least Waystage capability in a second foreign language.

For the general population (i.e. the large majority who will never become specialist linguists), this capability will:

a) enable them to use their first foreign language with some confidence in social and service encounters in international/ multilingual settings, and for some work-related purposes (e.g. handling telephone enquiries or business correspondence);
b) provide a solid foundation for more advanced/ specialised optional study of the first foreign language, in a further/ higher /continuing education setting, alongside other studies, as vocational and/or leisure needs develop (e.g. for those training as specialist multilingual office or service personnel);
c) produce citizens capable of tackling further languages effectively, either simultaneously or in later life as needs and interests change.

In addition to the minimum capabilities specified for all, we will continue to need a strong minority cohort of language specialists, who pursue their FL studies in an HE framework. This group can be expected to achieve proficiency in at least two languages, to at least Vantage level, as well as an indepth knowledge of the associated cultures, and a high level academic understanding of language as system. This cohort must be sufficiently large to staff language programmes at all levels of the educational system, as well as providing recruits to multilingual branches of the knowledge industries (publishing, information technology, translation/ interpreting etc).

1.3 In which languages will we need to have competence for the 21st century, at what levels and for what purposes? For what proportion of the population?

Of key importance for us are the major languages of the European Union which also have currency as languages of wider/ international communication: French, German, Spanish. These languages offer access to significant economic areas of the world, for purposes of short/ long term employment, and/ or for trade. They offer direct access to attractive and significant parts of our common European cultural heritage, as well as to lively contemporary media and youth cultures. They facilitate quality independent travel and tourism. Political and economic evolution over the next 20 years is likely to lead to greatly increased European integration, with increased mobility of the skilled

workforce, and merging of economic activity on many fronts (e.g. financial services, manufacturing).

We should set as a target that all citizens would achieve a minimum standard of Threshold Level or equivalent in ONE of these most significant European languages. Perhaps 20 per cent would achieve Threshold Level in TWO of them, and a further 40 percent would achieve Threshold Level in one, and Waystage or equivalent in a second.

A further group of languages of contemporary significance in Europe and/or of regional significance in the world should also be accessible to any citizen who wants to learn them, in local specialist centres of excellence (language college, FE college, university language centre etc). These languages would include Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Arabic, Russian, Urdu, Japanese, and Chinese. Perhaps 5 per cent of the population would achieve Waystage in at least ONE of these languages, and a smaller number would proceed to Threshold Level and beyond.

1.4 In what ways should we be responding to the linguistic resources represented by ethnic minority communities and indigenous languages within the population of the UK?

The UK is now a multilingual and multicultural society. However, many minority groups continue to experience racial discrimination and social exclusion. Public acknowledgement and respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity are one strand in a long term strategy promoting race equality and social inclusion. Following from this, the interests of the whole society will be served if a) the existence and cultural value of multilingualism within the UK is publicly acknowledged, and b) support is given to local speech communities in maintaining and transmitting individual languages.

Specifically:

A Language Question is needed in the Census of Population throughout the United Kingdom which will record the range of languages actually spoken. (At present language questions are asked only in the Censuses of Wales, Scotland and N Ireland, and they refer only to Welsh, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic. Well drafted census questions can be a reliable source of information, much better than the highly impressionistic information currently available on multilingualism in England. Ó Gliasáin 1996; Alladina and Edwards 1991)

Where viable local communities which justify adequate resourcing exist, schools and other public service institutions should operate bilingually and in a culturally sensitive manner. Schools in particular should ensure that:

- Children entering school with limited English are supported bilingually in order to access the full school curriculum;

- Primary school children have access in school to standard /high versions of their mother tongue, and are supported to achieve literacy in that language;

- Bilingual secondary school children are taught the standard/ high version of their mother tongue with appropriate cultural content, and are expected to achieve a Vantage standard in that language. (Reform of GCSE curricula is needed here.)

- Some exposure to locally active languages, including short intensive teaching options, should be available to speakers of other languages.

1.5 In what ways are technological advances likely to affect our need for capability in languages ?

Technological advances such as cable and satellite TV and the internet will make a global multilingual environment potentially much more accessible than before, for purposes of leisure, entertainment and access to information. In particular the internet will provide a cheap and cost-effective way for lesser used languages (or at least, those from the better-off regions of the world) to raise their profile and increase their accessibility outside their geographical base. (See for example 'Gàidhlig air an Líon': < http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/gaidhlig.html>.) This new accessibility will increase the options for people already interested in maintaining/ using languages other than English, and will not by itself create needs to learn them.

Technological advances will however have an impact on the language skills required in some specific service and 'knowledge' industries. For example, certain sorts of telephone call centre require multilingual staff (airline bookings is a well known example); natural language processing is an important and developing area of computer science, which needs multilingual staff to work in domains such as translation software.

2. *To what extent do present policies and arrangements meet these needs?*

2.1 *What provision is made for foreign language learning in the successive stages of education from primary school through to further and higher education? Is there an underlying rationale or strategy at each stage and between stages?*

At present we suffer from a lack of coordination from one sector to the next at all levels, and some sectors also lack a clear underlying rationale for what they are doing. Changes in one part of the system are made without due consideration of their likely impact on other sectors. For example, changes in secondary school programmes in recent years have provoked a series of reactive measures within the HE sector, rather than a planned and thoughtful adaptation. Similarly, changes in the content of modern languages degrees have meant that teacher education centres have had to adapt to a different and more diverse intake, without having been able to prepare properly for this. Similarly, the inter-relationship between development of literacy and fluent spoken proficiency in English has never been linked explicitly with subsequent work in foreign languages, with the result that opportunities to reduce the "strangeness" of the foreign language experience are being lost (Mitchell et al 1994).

FLs in primary education: This is one of the most problematic sectors, in England at least. A lot of effort and enthusiasm is going into primary FL teaching at local level. However there is no agreed curriculum, or teaching philosophy, and time allowed, quality of teaching, and standards achieved, vary significantly. The extent to which primary FL programmes float free from the rest of the language curriculum in the primary school, or are linked e.g. to the National Literacy Strategy, is unknown. And finally, primary schools offering a foreign language are almost certain to be offering French only, and further reinforcing the historic bias towards French, which is not in our longer term strategic interest.

FLs in Key Stage 3: The major achievement of the National Curriculum has been the inclusion of virtually all children in foreign language learning. The other major achievement of recent years has been a significant degree of diversification of the first foreign language within the National Curriculum framework, to include Spanish and German as viable alternatives to French. (Unless this diversification policy is sustained over a long period of time however, there will be a constant tendency to relapse towards French, and we are very concerned that the issue has not been followed through consistently by DfEE.)

The time allowed for languages in a crowded curriculum is quite restricted, however, especially in comparison with European norms; the National Curriculum is also proving a serious obstacle to the routine provision of a second foreign language. The MFLs curriculum is specified in detail only as far as communicative proficiency is concerned; while cultural studies and knowledge about language are mentioned in general terms, these broader educational domains are not specified to a similar degree of detail, nor are they supported with an assessment framework (DfE 1995). The practical result is that most teachers concentrate on the practical skills strand, and KAL work in particular is patchy, idiosyncratic and uncoordinated (Mitchell & Martin 1997); generally speaking there is no effective liaison with work being done in English. There is an excessive focus on accurate production in the levels of attainment specified for NC. (These were

'guesswork' in the first place, and are in some other respects at present pitched too low.) This means that most pupils get insufficient opportunities for creative, risk-taking language practice, and that autonomous activity such as extensive reading is not systematically developed. Worryingly, a recent review of OFSTED evidence suggests that the quality of teaching in MFLs compares poorly with that in other subjects even in KS3, and deteriorates further by comparison in Key Stage 4 (Dobson 1998).

FLs in Key Stage 4: After the relative success of Key Stage 3 inclusive 'languages for all' programmes, Key Stage 4 is once more a focus of concern (Dobson 1998). OFSTED have highlighted the apparent slowing of progression as pupils approach the end of KS3, after 3 years of secondary school study. There is evidence that such plateauing continues throughout KS4 for a significant proportion of pupils. OFSTED again note little pupil initated language, and enthusiasm appears to wane for many pupils. Much too small a minority continues with a second foreign language, a critical bottleneck for the future supply of advanced level language students and - eventually - specialist language professionals.

It is not satisfactory that NC levels stop at the end of Key Stage 3, to be replaced by a separate ladder of GCSE grades; a more integrated structure is needed. The National Curriculum Programmes of Study do continue into KS4, and the Part 1 list dealing with 'Learning and Using the Target Language' refers to an important range of language learning elements. However this needs unpacking in a way which makes practical sense to teachers, at KS 4 as at KS3, in terms of pupil progression and linguistic independence.

There is also an urgent need to interpret the Areas of Experience in a way which reflects the intellectual maturity of KS4 pupils. Much has been done in the last decade or so to produce lively, attractive materials which are fun for pupils. However this has sometimes led to a tendency to view language learning as a game. Whilst this approach may work for some time with younger pupils, there is a need to find different foci for the second stage of secondary school learning. Otherwise pupils tire of constantly mimicking dialogues based on transactional language, which rarely connects with their intellectual curiosity and individual self-expression.

The dream for many over the past two decades has been to democratise MFLs, making it available to all and teaching it in ways which have contemporary relevance. However we believe that this has often led to a premature emphasis on languages as an instrumental/ vocational tool to get things done, rather than as a medium for thought and creativity. Such emphasis has often produced the cliches of the 'walking phrase book', that is pupils with a stock set of phrases but little means to move outside of set routines, planning journeys they will never make, ordering meals they will never eat, and learning about people they will never meet. Some materials (for example those published by Charis to deal with spiritual, moral, cultural and social values in language learning) do offer topics which genuinely engage pupils and exepct them to think through issues, stories and serious topics in the FL. Much more needs to be done to avoid the shallowness often apparent in learning materials at this stage.

One alternative which shows promise is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), that is the teaching of academic subject matter such as History, Science etc

through the target foreign language (e.g. Fruhauf et al 1995). This style of language learning and teaching is growing in popularity in Europe and may offer us examples of good practice to guide our provision. Another way forward may be to relate school curricula more closely to the Common European Framework.

A particular problem affecting Key Stage 4 language teaching arises from current pressures on schools to achieve well in GCSE-based 'league tables' of results. Large numbers of schools have switched to modular GCSE courses because of perceptions (backed in some degree with research evidence) that a rise in mean grades awarded across the ability range will result. We do not believe that modular GCSE courses in foreign languages establish sufficiently secure long term linguistic foundations to ensure future progression, and believe the longer term impact of this results-driven game-playing will be to drive down overall standards.

Foreign languages 16-19: We believe that the present sixth form curriculum for academically inclined students is too narrow; for many students, the only foreign languages choice is between a full A level programme and nothing at all. Worryingly, after a substantial increase in the early 1990s, A level entries in languages are currently falling (CILT 1999), while AS level attracts only a few thousand students each year (just over 4000 in 1998). A broader, Baccalaureate style curriculum would be more appropriate preparation for 21st century higher education and employment, and could include a language strand much more routinely for a high proportion of students, including non-language-specialists.

In further education, we welcome the initiative to develop criterion-referenced language standards as a yardstick to measure foreign language proficiency relevant to the work environment (Languages Lead Body 1996). However we believe that in some respects the present standards are inadequate, and further research and development work will be needed if they are to gain real currency. In particular we are concerned about the construct validity of the proposed scales; the unclear relationship between the vocational/ situational character of the level descriptions, and general language proficiency; and the modular nature of the teaching/ assessment procedures. We are unconvinced that at lower levels at least, there is any real case for an independent vocational set of standards unrelated to the general standards proposed by the Council of Europe framework, and we would urge that this issue be reviewed.

FLs in higher education: Two main factors have caused important changes to traditional MFLs degree programmes at university levels, though neither has been centrally planned. Firstly, changes in the range and content of A level programmes have meant that students entering HE to study languages are a much more diverse population, with more variable skills (e.g. in writing) and lacking a shared background in literary studies. Secondly, falling numbers of applicants to MFL degree programmes have led to a competition among HE institutions for good quality recruits. This has led to an element of market-driven redesign of courses, promoting popular and attractive strands such as cultural/ film studies, and cutting back on formal linguistic training. This in turn has meant that the MFLs graduate is a much less homogeneous being than in the past, with the attendant advantages and disadvantages. They are likely to have had a broader experience in terms of content studied, but levels of practical communicative proficiency which are achieved at present vary enormously from one

institution to another (Coleman 1996). This in turn is causing knock-on problems for the teacher education domain, where present time and resource constraints make it extremely difficult to include any significant top-up language training within the PGCE year.

A very welcome development in recent years has been the willingness of HE institutions to offer ancillary language training to undergraduates in a wide range of disciplines, within and outside the framework of their core degree studies (Leder et al eds 1996; Little and Ushioda 1998). (One such programme is the four-year MEng degree at the University of Southampton, where engineering students have the opportunity to follow language courses in preparation for a credit-bearing period of engineering study at European HE institutions.) However this work has grown in a bottom-up, decentralised way, and the quality and level of available programmes varies greatly, as do the standards achieved. We believe that attention should be paid to the learning outcomes to be expected from such programmes, if a case is to be made that foreign language proficiency is one component of the 'transferable skills' to be expected of all graduates in the future. Again, there is a clear case for research/ development work to agree expected standards which are both realistic and worthwhile, and no obvious reason why these should not also be linked to the Council of Europe Common Framework.

2.1 *To what extent does the structure of qualifications pre-and post- sixteen promote appropriate standards and takeup of language learning?*

Pre-sixteen, takeup depends primarily on National Curriculum policy rather than on the nature of the qualifications available. For the 16-19 age group, the portfolio of choices in England (A level, AS level, NVQs based on National Language Standards) is clearly not working to promote adequate takeup especially for non-specialists. We believe that substantial research and development is required to develop credible post- GCSE language standards, and accompanying proficiency tests, which will reflect the practical needs of non-specialists, which are more broadly based and decontextualised than existing workplace-focussed NVQs. A well planned, context-independent assessment scheme could also provide suitable targets and accreditation for non-specialist HE students.

Regarding the promotion of standards, we believe that current qualifications (GCSE, NVQs etc) reflect fairly realistically what it is possible to achieve given the time allowed in current curriculum models. Whether success in these qualifications reflects genuinely independent and usable levels of communicative proficiency is much more problematic, and urgently needs research scrutiny. Once more we repeat that we believe linkage between British qualifications and the Common European Framework could provide the key to raising expectations and developing realism about the time and resources needed to achieve worthwhile language standards.

As indicated by the research of Coleman (1996), Modern Languages degrees awarded by British universities do not represent any guarantee of a common minimum standard of practical language proficiency. This is an issue which urgently needs attention.

2.3 How adequate is the extent of capability and qualification in languages achieved by young UK citizens as a result of present educational provision?

At present around half of the age cohort is being entered for GCSE in one or more foreign languages; just over half of those entered are achieving GCSE Grades A-C in a language (TES August 28 1998). Given the relative newness of the NC policy of languages for all, and the constraints under which language teaching operates, we think this is a reasonably creditable achievement by the MFLs profession. However, it does not by any means reflect the pool of language capability desirable for the general population in the 21st century, as this might be measured in terms of Council of Europe language standards. Such comparisons as are available suggest that education systems in other European countries are achieving substantially more, in terms of outcome proficiencies (see e.g. Milton and Meara 1998).

The most obvious current example of a shortage of appropriately qualified linguists emerging from our educational system is the shortage of well prepared recruits for teacher education programmes. This is a critical constraint which threatens the whole future development of languages capability.

2.5 Which languages are currently learned, and with what relative numerical importance? How does this pattern relate to present and future needs?

The only easily available measures of current language learning patterns are those provided by national examination statistics, and summarised annually by CILT (1999). Dependable evidence on language learning in the HE and adult/ continuing education sectors is particularly hard to obtain. Thus for example it is hard to conclude whether the present shortage of foreign language teachers results from an underlying shortage of HE students majoring in languages, or the unwillingness of language graduates to enter teaching.

CILT figures suggest that the range of languages being taught in schools is relevant to present and future needs, with some welcome recent strengthening of Spanish and German, for instance. There is clearly insufficient long term planning for national provision of the less-common but still important languages however(e.g. Chinese, Japanese). There has been recent significant increase in resourcing and provision for the indigenous minority languages (Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish). However at all levels the community/ heritage languages of newer immigrant communities (e.g. from South Asia) are seriously neglected.

3. *What strategic planning and initiatives will be required in the light of the present position?*

In general, it is necessary to to recognise the inter-connectedness between (i) the development of English and other mother tongues, and the move into foreign languages, (ii) language competence and language awareness, and (iii) language development and the freedom/need to improvise and make mistakes in the course of learning. (For (i) & (ii) see the Language Charter, for (iii) see FLs in Keystage 3 above.)

Within FLs, the most urgent initiatives have to do with:

3.1 the agreement of linked, commonly agreed, criterion referenced language standards to be used as a national yardstick to measure and certify relevant levels of foreign language communicative proficiency. With serious investment in research and development, this is an entirely practical proposal, for which clear precedents exist. (For example, the suite of proficiency tests developed by UCLES has gained currency as a set of language standards for English as a foreign language, and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines/ Oral Proficiency Interview are playing a somewhat similar role in the United States for a range of languages: ACTFL 1989.) As we have seen above, to date in the UK, our separate assessment schemes for the National Curriculum, GCSE, A Level and GNVQs do not begin to meet this need.

3.2 The linkage of UK language proficiency standards to internationally accepted standards, e.g. through wholehearted linkup with the Common European Framework, and integration of UK development with further European development projects.

3.3 National commitment to the inclusion of FL study in the primary curriculum, and development of an appropriate programme linking on one hand to the concerns of the National Literacy Strategy, and on the other to a re-thought secondary school FLs curriculum, to ensure continuity and progression.

3.4 A rethinking of the National Curriculum and GCSE programmes for Key Stages 3 and 4, building on from a new primary initiative, and which will also:

- Raise expectations about outcome standards to include a creative and independent control of the target language system for all students;
- Increase the intellectual challenge of FL study through links with other subject areas (especially English/ Knowledge about Language), and through a broadening of the areas of experience etc;
- Alongside improved standards and expectations for practical communicative proficiency, further develop, and assess, curriculum strands to do with language awareness and intercultural understanding.

3.5 A commitment to teaching community/ heritage languages within the school curriculum at primary as well as secondary level, and to bilingual support

including development of heritage language literacy, where local community demand warrants this.

3.6 National review of specialist degree level MFLs programmes, and setting of agreed language standards to be expected of an MFLs specialist graduate. Increase in the attractiveness of teaching as a career for well qualified language graduates.

3.7 Review of provision of lesser taught languages, and promotion of a national network of centres specialising in these languages, at different levels (language colleges, FE, HE, adult continuing education).

3.8 Development of a new assessment framework for non-specialist linguists post 16, which will target current AS level and GNVQ candidates as well as non-specialist HE students.

3.9 To underpin much of the preceding set of initiatives, a national research and development initiative is needed to properly develop and validate a credible overarching national framework of language standards and tests, in line with Council of Europe principles.

NOTES

1. There is no generally established framework of criterion referenced language standards and accompanying proficiency tests which has achieved currency in the UK for languages other than English as a foreign language. In this paper we refer to the levels proposed in the Common European Framework for modern languages by successive Council of Europe Modern Languages Projects. Detailed specifications and assessment proposals can be found in Council of Europe documentation (e.g.CCC 1996).

REFERENCES

Alladina, S and Edwards, V 1991 *Multilingualism in the British Isles* (2 vols). Harlow: Longman.
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 1989. *ACTFL proficiency guidelines*. Yonkers, NY: ACTFL.
Brumfit, C J ed 1995 *Language education in the National Curriculum*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Byram, M 1997. *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research 1999. *CILT Direct Yearbook 1999*. London: CILT.
Coleman, J A 1996. *Studying languages: a survey of British and European students*. London: CILT.
Council for Cultural Cooperation 1996. *Modern languages: learning, teaching, assessment. A common European framework of reference*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
Dickson, P and Cumming, A eds 1996. *Profiles of language education in 25 countries*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.
Department for Education (DfE) 1995. *Modern foreign languages in the National Curriculum*. London: HMSO.
Dobson A 1998 *MFL inspected: Reflections on inspection findings 1996/7*. London: CILT.
Fruhauf, G, Coyle, D and Christ, I 1995 *Teaching Content in a Foreign Language*. European Platform for Dutch Education.
Languages Lead Body 1996 *Revised National Language Standards*. London: CILT.
Leder, G, Reimann, N and Walsh, R eds 1996 *Ab initio language learning: a guide to good practice in universities and colleges*. London: CILT.
Little, D and Ushioda, E 1998. *Institution-wide language programmes*. London: CILT.
Mitchell, R F, Brumfit, C J and Hooper, J V 1994 *Final Report: 'Knowledge about Language', Language Learning and the National Curriculum*, Centre for Language in Education Occasional Papers 19, University of Southampton, 23 pp.
Mitchell, R and Martin, C 1997. Rote learning, creativity and 'understanding' in the foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching Research* 1/1, 1-27.
Ó Gliasáin, M 1996 *The language question in the census of population*. Dublin: Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann.

CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION OCCASIONAL PAPERS are a series of simply produced papers for informal circulation. Appearance in this series does not preclude subsequent publication, either in ***CLE Working Papers*** or elsewhere. Authors will welcome comments or responses from any reader.

Recent Papers:

33. *Trainee Teachers' Knowledge about Language* - Christopher Brumfit & Rosamond Mitchell January 1995

34. *Notes on Pre-independence Education in Tanganyika* - Philip Clarke March 1995

35. *Education and the Sister Arts* - Michael Benton December 1994

36. *Student Attitudes to Learning Modern Languages in the 1980s* - Paul Meara March 1995

37. *Entretiens* - Pierre Bourdieu and Michael Grenfell May 1995

38. *Policies Towards Providing English Language Classes for ERASMUS and Other Visiting Students: A Survey* - Alasdair Archibald November 1995

39. *Painting Shakespeare: An Introduction to Selected Paintings Based on Scenes from Shakespeare's Plays and their Use in the English Classroom* - Sally Butcher December 1995

40. *An Introduction to Differentiation in Modern Language Teaching* - Alison Miller February 1996

41. *Multimedia for Language Learning: a Report on the Development and Formative Evaluation of "Voices"* - Vicky Wright & Julie Watson February 1996

42. *On the Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis* - Martyn Hammersley April 1996

43. *The World Wide Web and its Contribution to Foreign Language Learning* - Alison Piper, Julie Watson & Vicky Wright July 1996

44. *Instructional Method and Approaches to Reading Development in Beginning Readers* -Vincent Connelly, Rhona Johnston & Brian Thompson January 1997

45. *Progression in Foreign Language Learning* - Rosamond Mitchell & Peter Dickson January 1997

46. *Advanced Language Learning Using New Electronic Media: a study of learning using an educational model* - Alison Piper & Vicky Wright February 1997

47. *The Reader in the Secondary World: a critical appraisal of the spectator-participant role* - Michael Benton March 1997

48. *English as a Foreign Language in China: past and present* - Josephine McGuire March 1997

49. *The Face of Adult Dyslexia in Higher Education, Dysfunctional Organisation: Intervention and Identification* - Geraldine Price July 1997

50. *The Reader-Response Journal in an L2 Context* - Brigitte Krück October 1997

51. *What Pupils Do: the role of strategic planning in modern foreign language learning* - Fay Fleming & Geoff Walls February 1998

52. *Marrying Form and Function: a place for grammar and total target language in the secondary Modern Foreign Languages classroom* - Ivy Hogg September 1998

53. *Lifelong Learning, Human Capital, and the Soundbite* - Alison Piper November 1998

54. *UK Capability in Languages: CLE response to the Nuffield Languages Enquiry* - Centre for Language in Education February 1999

Available for £2.50 with post and packing

*

Also available:

CLE Working Papers 1	107 pp	1990
CLE Working Papers 2	150 pp	1992
CLE Working Papers 3	134 pp	1994
CLE Working Papers 4	140 pp	1996
CLE Working Papers 5	forthcoming	

each £6.00 with postage and packing

*

CLE Briefing Document No.1: "Standard English"
Christopher Brumfit April 1993
CLE Briefing Document No.2: "The Canon"
Michael Benton November 1993
CLE Briefing Document No.3: "Advanced Language Training for English Teachers"
Christopher Brumfit November 1993
CLE Briefing Document No.4: "Adult Language Classes available in Southampton Area" Christopher Brumfit December 1993
CLE Briefing Document No.5: "Recent Government Reports on Language in the National Curriculum" Christopher Brumfit January 1995
CLE Briefing Document No. 6: "Television, Children and Violence" Andrew Hart October 1995
CLE Briefing Document No. 7: "EMT, ESOL, ESL, EFL, etc: Acronyms and Stereotypes in English Teaching" Christopher Brumfit November 1995
CLE Briefing Document No. 8: "British Studies: Current Discussion" Lynne Pollard June 1996
CLE Briefing Document No. 9: "Literacy as Social Practice: Contemporary International Debate" Mohamed Kamanda July 1997

each £2.00

Theses and Dissertations Relating to Language in Education in Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Southampton, 1967-1997

£2.50

*

Copies are obtainable (while stocks last) from Mrs Rita Corbidge, Research & Graduate School of Education, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ,for the cost of postage and photocopying.

Tel 00 + 44 + (0)1703 592433
Fax 00 + 44 + (0)1703 593556
email rc4@soton.ac.uk

*

© Centre for Language in Education

ED 021703

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS

☒ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket) form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☐ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").